

If I Should Die.

If I should die to-night,
 My friends would look upon my quiet face
 Before they laid it in its resting place,
 And deem that death had made it almost fair.
 And laying snow-white flowers against my hair,
 Would smooth it down with tearful tenderness,
 And fold my hands with lingering caress, —
 Poor hands, so empty and so cold to-night.

If I should die to-night,
 My friends would call to mind some loving thought,
 Some kindly deed the icy hand had wrought,
 Some gentle words the frozen lips had said,
 Errands on which the willing feet had sped.
 The memory of my selfishness and pride,
 My haughty words, should all be set aside,
 And so I should be loved and mourned to-night.

If I should die to-night,
 E'en hearts estranged would turn once more to me,
 Recalling other days remorsefully,
 The eyes that chill me with averted glance
 Would look upon me as of yore perchance,
 And soften in the old familiar way;
 For, who could war with dumb, unconscious clay?
 So I might rest forgiven of all to-night.

Oh, friends, I pray to-night,
 Keep not your kisses for my dead cold brow;
 The way is lonely let me feel them now.
 Think gently of me, I am travel-worn;
 My faltering feet are pierced with many a thorn.
 Forgive, Oh, hearts estranged, forgive, I plead!
 When dreamless rest is mine I shall not need
 The tenderness for which I long to-night.

CHOCTAW CUSTOMS.

Marriage and death are fraught with importance in all conditions of life; from the circle of the gem-crowned monarch, to that of the lowest serf; from the society, which is the outcome of centuries of culture, to the gathering of rude savages, the descendants of a long continuation of savages. There are few, if any, tribes which have not had some fixed code to govern the ceremonies attending those important proceedings. In regard to the former, the rites preceded and announced the event which was to bring happiness; to the latter, the solemnity was a declaration of the woe that had become the portion of the bereaved ones, and of

the joy which encompassed the departed.

The Choctaws were an intensely religious people, adoring the Supreme Being often in large assemblies. There is no reason to credit the statement that they were the worshipers of countless gods. According to verified tradition they worshiped "One Great Being" far beyond all their power to comprehend and render an inferior reverence to unseen spirits the beloved of the "Great One." Enough of the religion; I am digressing from the subject matter of this sketch.

The nation was divided into two clans or families, and marriages could not be contracted between persons of the same clan, as all of the division were related. This rule was rigidly enforced indeed. If wives were scarce, the braves seized women from a neighboring tribe and espoused them without consulting the desires of the stolen maiden.

The old men were a power not to be lightly contemned. They ruled with an iron hand, no passing by of the aged at that time. When a brave reached an age when conjugal bliss seemed desirable, he intimated his wishes to some old uncle and, presto, a wife was provided. The old gentleman, if of an economical turn, sought until he found a desirable maiden whose parents were willing to give her to a stalwart youth, or if he was free of riches a wife was found and the price demanded promptly paid. It is a matter of curiosity, that, although one hundred dollars is the price of the brown hand of an Indian lassie of the present day, the old custom is a little changed, the government profits by the disposal of her daughters.—Strange is it not?—

The negotiations were always carried on with great state, as the entire clan was interested in the transfer of one of their maidens.

The "uncle" after making sure of the bride, announced to the brave the com-